1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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Bison Horn Maria

PREFACE

THE Administration of Bastar State has generously subsidized the publication of this book, and for this practical sympathy I must thank Colonel Meek, the Agent to the Governor-General for the Eastern States, and Mr. E. S. Hyde, I.C.S., Administrator of Bastar State. I hope that it will not be the last book to be written about the Marias. More systematic field-work will without doubt correct and supplement many of my statements; I shall be content if my book tempts any trained worker to visit the ethnologically unexplored lands of Bastar and Jeypore.

My four years as Administrator of Bastar State kept me busy in camp and office with administrative problems of all kinds. The primary object of my enquiries was to ascertain grievances, especially those caused by the adoption in a primitive State of criminal, civil and revenue laws framed for British Indian districts some centuries more 'advanced'. In getting the aboriginal to show me his house and his possessions, in watching his domestic and agricultural routine, and in attending his simple social and religious ceremonies I found the readiest path to his confidence and to appreciation of his real feelings about the administration. Question begat counter-question, and attempts to explain the domestic life of the English to Marias were interesting and amusing. If because I was primarily an administrator I have sometimes dwelt at length on administrative problems, I do not repent: for, despite such views as those advanced by Mr. N. M. Joshi and Mr. M. S. Aney in the Indian Legislative Assembly debate of February 18th, 1936, on the areas to be wholly or partially excluded under the recent Government of India Act, when they heartily damned all anthropologists as wishing to keep the primitive races of India 'uncivilized' and 'in a state of barbarism' as raw material for their science and 'in order to add to their blessed stock of scientific knowledge', anthropology has a very practical value to all charged with the administration of other races if it can discover the thoughts and need of those races. The results of the divorce of administration from anthropology as seen in the system of land revenue, police and judicial administration applied to the Maria tracts of Bastar have been as strikingly revealed on a larger scale by the post-1919 attempts in Bombay and the Central Provinces to force prohibition upon the Bhil, the Gond and the Korku.

Few now are the regions of India where the white man is unknown, and fewer still those in which the Hindu has not yet

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Satyanarayan who is believed by the Maria to perform some medical magic to free them from erotic desires. Rai Saheb Niranjan Singh, Assistant Administrator, who himself has tried and sentenced a large number of Maria criminals, threw much light on the social conditions that give rise to crimes in Bastar. To the police I must give a special word of thanks. Instead of resenting the intrusion of an amateur, Mr A. C. Mayberry, M.B.E., State Superintendent, and his staff gave me every possible assistance. Thakur Manbahal Singh particularly gave me information about the psychology of the homicide which revealed his very deep knowledge of the people. To many other policemen, Circle-Inspectors, Sub-Inspectors and Constables, who aided me in my tours and enquiries, I must express my gratitude. Mr Qudratulla Khan gave me valuable information on Excise matters. Mr Janardhan Joshi and Mr Ramakrishna took great trouble to find records for me, and helped me in every way. Mr S. M. Ishaque's experience of the Maria is unique. He accompanied me on one important tour, and even when lying in great pain in hospital gave me guidance and advice. Mr Q. Huq and Mr M. M. Khirey, who were at the time Tahsildars of Jagdalpur and Dantewara respectively, exerted themselves in every way to assist me in my tours, and greatly encouraged me by their support.

Mr Sampat Singh acted as my interpreter and teacher in Gondi on most of the later tours. His help was quite invaluable. He himself had been present as a clerk at many murder trials, and was often able to expose the real points at issue. I am very grateful for his company and for the intelligence and energy which he put into a difficult and exacting task. Gulabdas, my assistant, who has been under training for many years and can now be regarded as an expert in his particular sphere of enquiry, did excellent exploratory work, and by his affable and insinuating address won the confidence of many Maria and persuaded them to reveal their secrets.

Part of the expenses of research were covered by a research grant from Merton College: I owe a heavy debt of gratitude to the Warden and Fellows for their assistance. The actual publication of the book was made possible by the enthusiasm and practical assistance of my friend Mr Jehangir

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P. Patel. The deeper realities of friendship and alliance are not matters for public acknowledgement: this book is itself a token and a proof of them. Mr Patel's share in it has been complete.

Mr C. R. Hemeon, I.C.S., and Mrs Hemeon read the manuscript and made important comments and suggestions. Mr Hemeon adds to an extensive legal and judicial experience an ardent interest in criminology and Mrs Hemeon's unique gifts of understanding and insight make her the kind of critic that an author prays for.

Mrs Maeve Wood made two beautiful drawings (the Anga Pen and the Bison-horn head-dress) and gave much help in the preparation of the maps and half-tones. Mr R. D. Motaframm's ready and expert hand was responsible for the other line-drawings. The picture of the Meriah sacrifices was discovered for me by Mr Evelyn Wood.

To Mr C. R. Gerrard I am specially indebted for the dust-cover which takes the book out into the world with beauty and significance.

Mr W. V. Grigson, I.C.S., first inspired me to visit Bastar and then helped to make it possible for me to stay there. A Foreword from him is peculiarly appropriate: his knowledge and love of Bastar is unprecedented and he himself handled with understanding and justice many of the incidents in this book.

Mr Grigson was succeeded in Bastar by Mr D. R. Rutnam, I.C.S., who established administrative principles which have been of the utmost advantage to the aboriginals and from whom I have learnt much about the mentality of the Maria criminal.

I must not conclude without a word of thanks to the Manager and staff of the India Printing Works who devoted themselves to the task of producing this book with accuracy and despatch; to the staff of Messrs. Wagle who made the half-tones; and to Mr P. N. V. Nathan for his faithful and enthusiastic work on a difficult manuscript.

VERRIER ELWIN

Patangarh,
Mandla District, India
1 July 1943

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